

# Randall Kane, former owner of Santa Cruz's Catalyst club

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SANTA CRUZ — Randall Philip Kane, the former owner of The Catalyst nightclub in downtown Santa Cruz, died Monday morning at his home in Corralitos. He was 85.

Kane died of congestive heart failure, his brother Russell Kane said. A memorial date is pending.

Russell Kane said his brother should be remembered in the hue of nightclub lights and quality music. Kane lived passionately as an artist and intellectual, father and husband, employer and social engineer, his brother said.

"If he wanted to be an artist, he could have done it, but he chose to be a businessman instead," Russell Kane said. "But he never lost the passion for it."

Randall Philip Kane was born Oct. 12, 1923, in Minnesota. His family moved to Ohio when he was about 9, but before they left, Randall

Kane made his mark.

He used his tongue to paint a mural inside the family's home featuring monkeys paddling down a river in a canoe, his brother said.

"My mother wouldn't let anyone touch it," his brother said. "It was wild."

Kane watched with horror five years later when Pearl Harbor was bombed. Although he abhorred war, his family said, he signed up at age 18 for the Army the first thing the next day. He served for five years as a military police officer in the Pacific Theater, rising to the rank of corporal, which he jokingly bragged about in later years.

Kane graduated from Ohio State University with a bachelor's degree in English literature.

He moved to California in 1954, a year after marrying his wife, the late Caryl Underwood James. They had six children, all of whom survive.

Kane's three-year stint as

a dean for the San Francisco Art Institute didn't satiate his need for adventure and art. Instead, he turned his attention to a coffeehouse on the ground floor of the old St. George Hotel on Front Street in Santa Cruz.

"He gave birth to The Catalyst," said Gino Krum, who worked 10 years as a bartender for Kane. "It was the best nightclub around because he wanted it to be."

He later relocated the club to the former site of a bowling alley on Pacific Avenue.

"He's a Santa Cruz icon," said Gary "Bo" Tighe, who has booked shows for The Catalyst since 1978, two years after he started working there. Tighe thought of Randall Kane as a father figure, even though Kane had a reputation of being a bit gruff. "He was definitely a unique person with a million stories — we laughed every time we got together."

Kane owned The Catalyst for 34 years and made it one of the most popular night-



PAULINE LUBENS — MERCURY NEWS

With Randall Philip Kane as owner, the Catalyst club on Pacific Avenue in Santa Cruz became a nationally known rock club, hosting performances by the likes of the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Neil Young.

clubs between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Once he put in the best sound system he could afford, big names like the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Neil Young came to Kane to book a show.

"Randall Kane created what is arguably the most impressive club venue on the planet," said Tom Miller, concert programmer for Don Quixote's International Music Hall in Felton. "I'd be surprised if any other club could create a list of bands equal to what The Catalyst

has booked over the years."

The patrons remember Kane for the venue, but his employees remember him as an eccentric man who loved to ride his bike in rainbow suspenders, solve the New York Times crossword puzzle, hang out at The Catalyst bar on Friday night happy hour and see people succeed.

"He wasn't always politically correct," Krum said. "But The Catalyst changed everyone in this town, and so did he."